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New York

President:	Mr. Adom	(Côte d'Ivoire)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2018/1065)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2018/1065)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/1065 which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa since the issuance of the report before the Council (S/2018/1065). Allow me to highlight a few issues and update members on the most recent developments.

In Sao Tomé and Principe, on 22 November, the National Assembly was inaugurated and Delfim Santiago das Neves, from the opposition coalition, was elected as the Assembly's new President. On 29 November, President Evaristo do Espirito Santo Carvalho appointed Jorge Lopes Bom Jesus, the leader of the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe/Social Democratic Party, as the new Prime Minister. On 3 December, the President swore in the new Government of Mr. Bom Jesus, which is composed of 12 Ministers, including three women, and two Secretaries of State. I must commend all stakeholders in Sao Tomé and Principe for their commitment to resolve their differences through constitutional mechanisms to defuse the tensions that arose following the 7 October legislative elections. I also congratulate the people of Sao Tomé and Principe for their tireless efforts to maintain peace and stability. This is a positive example to follow.

In Gabon, the situation remains calm after the legislative and local elections held in October. However, speculation over President Ali Bongo Ondimba's health conditions remains a source of concern, while some opposition and civil society leaders continue to criticize the decision by the Constitutional Court to amend article 13 of the Constitution, on 14 November, in order to authorize the Vice-President to chair the Council of Ministers in the event of the temporary unavailability of the Head of State. Meanwhile, in close coordination with key international partners, I have continued to hold meetings with political actors in Libreville and to urge all Gabonese to respect the Constitution and to preserve the unity, peace and stability of the country.

I remain concerned about the situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. I reaffirm the United Nations commitment to the territorial integrity and unity of the country. Violence has not diminished, and allegations of human rights violations by all sides continue to be reported. A Kenyan priest was shot dead on 21 November in Kembong, South-West region, and, on 24 November, three priests from the Archdiocese of Buea, South- West region, and one driver were abducted by unidentified gunmen.

The number of internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring Nigeria is still high. Several schools remain closed in the South-West and North-West regions. I am particularly concerned about the effect of the crisis on women and children. During my visit to Cameroon from 17 to 22 November, I met with key Government officials and stressed to all actors the necessity for inclusive dialogue as a constructive and sustainable way forward towards a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

I welcome the efforts of the Government to provide humanitarian access and assistance. That is a step in the right direction. In that regard, I also appeal to the Government to continue to safeguard access by humanitarian partners to the populations in need and to ensure that all human rights violations are addressed. I was encouraged by the Government's commitment to

putting in place plans to address the root causes of the crisis, including through accelerated decentralization and the activities of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. I encourage national authorities to pursue such efforts, including by implementing confidence-building measures as soon as possible.

On 30 November, President Biya signed a decree creating the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, based in Yaoundé, with regional centres in Bamenda, Buea and Mora, respectively in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions. The National Committee, which is under the authority of the Prime Minister, is responsible for organizing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants of Boko Haram and the armed groups in the North-West and South-West regions. As part of a wider dialogue framework, I encourage the Committee to work in close consultation with relevant groups, including civil society and communities, in order to ensure that the particular needs of the three regions and their populations are met. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) stands ready to support the Government in its efforts to seek a lasting solution to the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions, as well as to continue assisting national authorities in the fight against Boko Haram in the context of existing regional frameworks together with the relevant regional States and organizations.

In Chad, legislative elections, which have been due to take place since 2015 and were originally scheduled for November 2018, were postponed. I encourage the Chadian authorities to hold those elections as soon as possible and call on the international community to provide the necessary financial support to the Government of Chad, as required. At the same time, I welcome the effective functioning of the national framework for political dialogue, which is playing a key role in preparation of the legislative elections. On 6 and 7 December, while in Chad for the ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), I met with members of the Government to discuss, among other things, peace and security issues in Central Africa and increasing conflicts between farmers and herders in the context of transhumance. I was also encouraged by the commitment of national authorities to ensure the safety and security of the population in the Tibesti desert, near the border with Libya, affected by recent attacks carried out by armed elements. I appeal to the Chadian authorities to seek peaceful ways to address that situation in a sustainable manner.

(*spoke in French*)

The recent increase in violence in the Central African Republic poses a threat to security in the subregion. A large part of the population remains internally displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. In accordance with my mandate for the region, I continue to urge the countries of the subregion to ensure that their efforts coalesce in supporting the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and to maintain their concerted and constructive commitment during the critical phase of the implementation of a possible agreement. Moreover, I continue to support the work under way to operationalize and revitalize the joint commissions comprised of the Central African Republic and its neighbours as mechanisms for improving cooperation among those States in the effective management of cross-border issues. I will continue to enlist the necessary support for the African Initiative in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to threaten the security of the population in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I therefore encourage the African Union to adopt a comprehensive and cautious approach in its ongoing efforts to replace the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA in order to eliminate the possibility of any security vacuum that the group could exploit to relaunch and intensify its destabilization activities.

Violent extremism and terrorism remain a significant threat to the security and development of the subregion. Although much progress has been made in the fight against Boko Haram, that terrorist group continues to pursue its indiscriminate attacks on defence and security forces and civilians. In response, the countries of the subregion continue to intensify their efforts to combat the group through better cooperation. It is important for the States of Central and West Africa to develop strategies that address the root causes of the insurgency. To that end, I welcomed the holding on 29 November of an extraordinary summit of the Lake

Chad Basin Commission in N'Djamena to discuss the ways and means of responding to the recent increase in Boko Haram's activities in the region.

The joint summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, held in Lomé on 30 July, marked an important step for both subregions in their fight against shared security threats. UNOCA has already begun to take action, in conjunction with the ECCAS secretariat and in cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), to support the effective implementation of the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, which sets out the decisions arrived at during the joint summit. Accordingly, a meeting of experts from the ECCAS secretariat and the ECOWAS Commission has been planned to agree on a joint action plan for the implementation of the Lomé Declaration. In the meantime, I continue to work closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, in coordinated support of efforts to address the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism.

Insecurity related to transhumance is increasing in Central Africa. According to reports, on 22 November eight people were killed in a clash between farmers and herders in Abéché, in eastern Chad. In that regard, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa is facilitating discussions on that issue, which is transnational in nature and has economic, security, political and environmental implications. UNOCA will continue to work with ECCAS to address that issue, while maintaining close cooperation with UNOWAS, given the issue's interregional ramifications. During the first half of 2019, Special Representative Chambas and I will conduct a field visit to some of the areas affected by the conflicts between farmers and herders. UNOCA, which serves as the secretariat for UNSAC, supported the holding of the forty-seventh meeting of the Committee in N'Djamena from 3 to 7 December 2017. To date, UNSAC is the only forum enabling Central African States to meet regularly at the ministerial level to discuss common security issues.

The Secretary-General of ECCAS and I took that opportunity to call on all ECCAS member States to ratify the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly — known as the Kinshasa Convention. Together with the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, we launched a joint project on the margins of UNSAC, entitled "Support for African States towards achieving the vision of 'Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020': capacity-building of Central African States".

In accordance with the mandate granted to it by the Council, UNOCA remains committed to supporting Member States and subregional organizations from Central Africa, in particular ECCAS. While supporting efforts to maintain peace, I urge ECCAS member States to remain committed to the institutional reform of that subregional organization and to accelerate that process. I am confident that the successful completion of its reform will be an important step for the organization in improving its functionality, including funding mechanisms, in order to ensure the effective implementation of key projects in the areas of peace and security and governance.

As recommended by the Security Council in its presidential statement S/PRST/2018/17 of 10 August, the mandate and activities of UNOCA will be subject to strategic review in 2019, prior to the submission of the Secretary-General's next report on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the Regional Office. In that regard, I welcome the Council's continued support for the specific role played by UNOCA as the United Nations regional office responsible for political affairs and peace and security in a subregion that has considerable resources yet faces enormous challenges, requiring a concerted and coordinated approach by the international community. As Head of UNOCA, I remain committed to providing the best possible support to Member States and to producing positive results in preventing conflict and maintaining peace in Central Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ghelani.

Ms. Ghelani: Violence, extreme poverty, climate change and population growth are driving record

levels of vulnerability among millions of people in Central Africa. My briefing today focuses on the main humanitarian crises in the region, including those affecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Chad and Cameroon.

Out of the estimated more than 180 million people living in Central Africa, nearly 26 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019. That is a dramatic increase of 22 per cent from 2018. One person out of seven in Central Africa is caught up in a crisis and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection. That is compared to a global calculation of 1 in every 70 people.

Around half of those requiring humanitarian assistance and protection in Central Africa are found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The humanitarian situation in the country has deteriorated further in 2018 and is one of the world's largest and most complex crises. As noted in resolution 2439 (2018), the Ebola epidemic in the north-east is occurring in a context of much wider humanitarian needs. Ebola has already claimed 289 lives and is still spreading. The response is particularly difficult given the extremely challenging security environment, with attacks against civilians by non-State armed groups interrupting Ebola containment efforts. To mitigate the possible impact in the event that the outbreak spreads to neighbouring countries, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, yesterday approved a $10 million regional allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

The welcome attention given to the Ebola outbreak should not, however, overshadow the multitude of simultaneous crises that affect the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In all, more than 12 million people need humanitarian assistance. The current cholera outbreak is the largest on record over the past 15 years. With more than 26,000 people affected and almost 900 deaths this year, cholera has killed even more people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo than Ebola. The security situation has deteriorated in the east of the country causing new and large-scale displacements of people in search of safety and protection. Furthermore, the influx of more than 360,000 Congolese nationals returning from Angola is adding pressure to the fragile Kasai province, already affected by years of inter-ethnic conflicts.

I have just returned from the Central African Republic, where, as Special Representative Fall noted in his briefing, the humanitarian situation is also extremely dire. Areas that were relatively stable in the past, such as the south-east, where recovery and development programmes are about to be rolled out, have this year relapsed into conflict. The escalating violence has taken a heavy toll on the people of the Central African Republic, with 2.9 million people — well over half the population — now requiring humanitarian assistance. The number of internally displaced persons has reached more than 640,000 — an increase of over 60 per cent in this year alone. One in four children in the country is displaced. While the needs have grown, the increasing number of security incidences, including direct attacks on aid organizations and their staff, has made it even harder to access the people requiring assistance.

As previously noted, the worsening situation in the Central African Republic has also had a significant impact on neighbouring countries. Cameroon is today hosting 268,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, while Chad is hosting more than 100,000 refugees. That translates into a significant burden on already vulnerable host communities, and many of the refugees have few prospects of returning home to the Central African Republic in the near future.

Furthermore, Chad and Cameroon, in addition to Nigeria and the Niger, are seriously affected by the crises involving Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. Now in its ninth year, that regional crisis has led 2.4 million people to flee their homes, and some 10.8 million people currently require humanitarian assistance and protection. Continuing insecurity remains a major impediment to people being able to return home and re-establish their livelihoods. The protection situation in the Lake Chad basin remains particularly serious, with frequent killings, kidnappings, suicide bombings and other attacks attributed to Boko Haram, as well as high levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Girls remain at serious risk of kidnappings and continue to be used for suicide attacks. As Special Representative Fall noted, the situation for women and children is particularly concerning.

Beyond the regional crisis in the Lake Chad basin and the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic, Cameroon is facing an additional humanitarian crisis in its South-West and North-West regions, as already expressed. Since the Council was last briefed by Special Representative Fall on Central

Africa half a year ago (see S/PV.8284), internal displacement in those parts of Cameroon has tripled and today counts more than 430,000 internally displaced persons. In addition, more than 30,000 Cameroonians have fled across the border to Nigeria, seeking refuge. This is now one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in Africa. The majority of the displaced persons are hiding in dense forests, without adequate shelter and lacking food, water and basic services. Schools and markets are also being disrupted and there are alarming health needs.

As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1065), we note with grave concern the deteriorating situation with respect to the protection of civilians, including reported killings, the burning of homes and villages, extortion and kidnappings in the South-West and North-West regions of Cameroon. There have been multiple attacks on schools and threats against students and teachers, including two large-scale abductions and subsequent releases last month of 78 students and 3 teachers in Bamenda and 20 students in Kumba.

Despite limited access, humanitarian partners are scaling up their presence in those parts of Cameroon. Food distribution has so far reached more than 17,000 people and some 4,000 people have received shelter materials. However, severe underfunding has had a significant impact on the humanitarian community's ability to respond to the escalating crisis. The main sources of funding are currently CERF — whose rapid response allocation will be depleted at the end of this month — and the agencies' own internal, unearmarked funding.

The lack of funding experienced by humanitarian partners in Cameroon reflects a broader regional trend. This year, every single humanitarian response plan in Central Africa — for Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — is funded far less than the global average of 56 per cent. Cameroon is the least funded of all, at 39 per cent of the requirements. This needs to change if the humanitarian response in the region is to be fully effective, and we are calling on Member States for their urgent support.

Over the past six months, not only have the humanitarian crises in Central Africa persisted, but several have grown further. Many of the crises are rooted in ongoing armed conflicts. Strengthening the protection of civilians — a core issue on the Security Council's agenda — is of the utmost importance in that region. Our hope is that today's discussion will take us further towards a collective response that is commensurate with the needs and aspirations of the people in Central Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Ghelani for her briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I wish to thank Special Representative Fall and Ms. Ghelani of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for briefing the Council today and for all that their respective teams are doing in what is a complicated and difficult region, as they have both set out.

Today, I will address issues that affect the region as a whole: the situation in the Anglophone north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon and the impact of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. I will not address the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi or the Central African Republic, as we have the opportunity to discuss these issues in other Council meetings.

The United Kingdom welcomes the holistic approach that the Special Representative has taken, both with this report (S/2018/1065) and to promote peace and stability in Central Africa. An approach that covers the political, humanitarian and human rights situation and addresses root causes is crucial to conflict prevention and resolution. We also welcome the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to drive forward the women and peace and security agenda under resolution 1325 (2000). We encourage UNOCA to continue to focus on building the capacity of regional organizations to enable delivery of their early-warning mechanisms, conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.

I would like to focus now on a country of particular concern in the region — that is, Cameroon. I should start by saying that the United Kingdom recognizes the many positive contributions Cameroon is making to stability in the region, including its continued commitment to the fight against Boko Haram and the sanctuary that Cameroon offers to refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic. However, we are concerned by the reality of the rapidly deteriorating

security and humanitarian situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

In particular, we are concerned about high levels of displacement and take very seriously Ms. Ghelani's warning that this is now one of the fastest growing displacement crises in Africa. Reports of human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by armed separatist groups and Government forces — including extrajudicial killings, other killings, abductions, restrictions of movement and restrictions of access to health and education, as described in the Secretary-General's report — mean that we must always be alert to the risk of the situation escalating, affecting the broader peace and stability of the Central African region. We have already seen over 30,000 Cameroonians flee into Nigeria. If grievances are not addressed, tensions are likely to increase further.

These concerns are not new. I raised them in the Council's discussion in March, as did others (see S/PV.8212). Unfortunately, we have not seen the action needed to address the situation and, since March, it has deteriorated further. We welcome President Biya's recent pledge to address the situation, but words alone will not improve things. We strongly urge the Government of Cameroon to take urgent action, including by actively addressing the situation through inclusive dialogue with the Anglophone leadership to address underlying issues; undertaking confidence-building measures in order to defuse tensions and build conditions for dialogue, including the release of political detainees and implementing the Government's own commitments on decentralization and the recommendations of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism; and allowing full humanitarian access and access for human rights monitors to all parts of the country. I would also hope and expect that our own Special Representative of the Secretary-General will have access to wherever he wanted to go. Accountability must also be ensured for all those responsible for human rights violations and abuses. We also call on the armed groups involved to cease their attacks on civilians; to allow full humanitarian access and access to human rights monitors; and to engage with the Government on these issues.

The United Kingdom, for its part, is committed to supporting Cameroon, and I am pleased to announce today that the United Kingdom is contributing $3.1 million to the United Nations response in the Anglophone regions. That is equivalent to 20 per cent of this year's flash appeal for the Anglophone crisis to address immediate humanitarian and medical needs. We strongly encourage other Member States to fund this as an important part of the conflict prevention effort. Preventing a crisis costs significantly less than resolving one.

We have raised our concerns quietly and directly with the Government so far, and we are committed to working with the Government of Cameroon in every way we can to help resolve this situation. But I fear that, unless action is taken and the situation improves, concern over the situation in Cameroon is likely to increase among Security Council members and become a more prominent part of our discussions.

In addition to Cameroon, I would like to raise our ongoing concerns about the humanitarian and security situation in the wider Lake Chad basin, which continues to deteriorate. The United Kingdom has played its part in providing humanitarian support, as well as significant support particularly to assist the Nigerian security forces in the fight against Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), but this matter needs the ongoing focus and support of the international community.

The deteriorating security situation in north-eastern Nigeria is of particular concern and one, I note, that is shared by the Secretary-General. ISWA has increased the frequency, range and sophistication of its attacks and has attacked forward operating military bases in north-eastern Nigeria. The execution by ISWA of humanitarian workers like Saifura Khorsa and Hauwa Liman, who were both abducted while providing antenatal care to communities in desperate need, is a telling reminder of the brutality of the activities of ISWA.

Let me conclude by reiterating that we have an opportunity to prevent further conflict and the inevitable suffering and insecurity together. I hope we can all act to do so.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We thank Special Representative Fall and Ms. Ghelani for their briefings today and for their tireless and very important efforts. They can count on our support, both in the preventive action of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Advocating for an increased focus on preventive diplomacy has been a priority for Sweden throughout our tenure on the Council. One of the most effective operational tools the United Nations has for preventing conflict is precisely its regional offices, which are uniquely positioned to engage in constructive dialogue and provide political accompaniment, with local knowledge, continuity and respect. They can take a comprehensive approach to challenges and support countries in addressing the root causes of conflict, as well as effective and coordinated regional responses, including to promote regional integration, cross-border cooperation and development. The work of these important regional offices and of our regional envoys must therefore continue to be actively supported, and we believe that their capacity should be further strengthened.

My Foreign Minister, Ms. Margot Wallström, witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of climate change on local communities, especially women, during her joint visit to Chad this summer with Special Representative Fall and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. Climate-related security risks are among the challenges that require both a holistic approach and a regional response. We welcome the expanded analysis on climate and security in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1065). We hope to see that approach also replicated in other regions and in all parts of the United Nations system.

The increase in conflicts between farmers and herders, aggravated by the impact of climate change, is a worrisome development. We welcome the regional plan to reinforce conflict prevention and early-warning mechanisms at the national and regional levels, with the participation of women and youth. We appreciate UNOCA's efforts in that regard.

The situation in Central Africa has been dominated by elections in a number of countries in the subregion, as we have just heard. We must continue to ensure the equal and unhindered participation of women in those processes, including possibilities to run for office. The situation room platform, set up by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Cameroon, is a good example of how women can be encouraged to take part in elections. Operationalizing the regional action plan for the women and peace and security agenda remains critical, and related initiatives by UNOCA and regional organizations should be supported.

In the spirit of preventive diplomacy, the deteriorating situation in Cameroon must be addressed. We are deeply concerned over the acute humanitarian situation that I have described today and the massive displacement caused by the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of the country. Continued disturbing reports of grave violence, including extrajudicial killings, abductions and restrictions of movement, must be investigated, and accountability for all human rights violations and abuses must be ensured. A continued crisis risks having serious regional implications, including on the fight against terrorism in the Lake Chad basin and efforts to bring peace to the Central African Republic. As we have heard today, that is the fastest-growing displacement situation, which represents a clear threat to international peace and security.

To change that trajectory, the post-electoral period should offer a window of opportunity. We therefore urge all parties to immediately end the violence call on the Government to urgently take concrete steps to build genuine trust and confidence, as underlined by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall this morning. That includes engaging in an inclusive, mediated dialogue with communities in the English-speaking region, as well as to release political detainees. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access must always be ensured, in accordance with humanitarian principles. Access should also be provided to human rights monitors and the media to help establish the facts.

United international engagement is needed to assist Cameroon in managing the crisis, including building trust and overcoming divisions. International support is also needed to address the humanitarian situation. We therefore encourage the Government to seek support from the United Nations and regional actors. If the crisis continues to deteriorate and steps are not taken to address the situation, the Council should consider options for more active engagement in a spirit of prevention.

The security situation in the wider Lake Chad basin remains one of deep concern. The number of attacks carried out by Boko Haram has increased in recent months and the humanitarian situation is not improving, as we have heard. The international community needs to do more to support national and regional efforts in addressing the situation. We welcome UNOCA's continued support to the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the implementation

of the regional strategy for stabilization, recovery and resilience of the areas affected by Boko Haram. Sweden will continue to contribute, including with substantial humanitarian assistance, as well as through the European Union's development cooperation and support, to the Multinational Joint Task Force in the fight against Boko Haram.

In conclusion, United Nations regional offices, including UNOCA, have an important role to play as the United Nations moves towards a prevention-centred approach in the spirit of sustaining peace. Many of the security risks that we face today, such as climate change and terrorism, are not bound by national borders but will, by default, need regional and international responses. Beyond our membership on the Council, we will continue to advocate for effective conflict prevention, including through supporting regional responses by United Nations regional offices and regional organizations. We expect to remain a major humanitarian donor in response to the huge needs outlined by Director Ghelani today. We urge others to join us and respond to her appeal this morning.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Fall and Director Ghelani for their briefings today. Their work is vital to a region facing a wide range of political, economic and social challenges, particularly in Cameroon, on which I will focus my remarks.

The security and humanitarian conditions in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions have significantly deteriorated since the previous briefing to the Security Council on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), held in June (see S/PV.8284). Violence continues to escalate, obstructing vital humanitarian aid delivery to over 430,000 internally displaced persons and blocking health and education services to rural children.

October was the most violent month on record in Cameroon in recent years. Judging from anecdotal reports, we fear that November will surpass October as the bloodiest month on record. We do not want to see that horrible trend continue again in December. The violence must stop now. Violence between Government and Anglophone separatists has resulted in killings and abductions of civilians, including a United States missionary, who was killed on 30 October.

Faced with mounting insecurity, tens of thousands of Cameroonians have fled to neighbouring Nigeria, as we have heard, while hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced and need humanitarian assistance. The stakes in Cameroon are too high for that crisis to continue unaddressed. Cameroon remains an essential security partner in the fight against Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa, including as a member of the Multinational Joint Task Force. The continuing crisis threatens to detract from our mutual security objectives in the Lake Chad basin.

The United States calls for an immediate and broad-based reconciliatory dialogue, without preconditions, between the Government of Cameroon and separatists in the North-West and South-West regions. We urge all sides to forswear violence, restore peace and resolve their grievances through political dialogue. We note that in his inaugural address on 6 November President Biya expressed confidence that "there is an honourable way out in everyone's interest". We encourage President Biya to make good on his commitment to accelerate the decentralization process and adopt the recommendations of the Cameroonian National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

The creation of a Government-led humanitarian assistance coordination centre is a promising development. However, the Government has done little to address concerns over its own lack of respect for the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality and the guarantees of unhindered access to conflict-affected populations. We urge the Government of Cameroon to prioritize respect for humanitarian principles and ensure unobstructed access for United Nations agencies and humanitarian non-governmental organizations assisting conflict-affected populations.

The United States believes that UNOCA, through the good offices of Special Representative Fall, could provide technical assistance and mediation support to facilitate a broad-based reconciliatory dialogue without preconditions. We hope that the Economic Community of Central African States, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) and the AU Commission will enhance their efforts to support the peace process. We encourage them to coordinate with UNOCA in that effort.

A peaceful and stable Cameroon is critical to regional stability in Central Africa, and both deserves and requires the continued and close attention of the Council. As noted by our Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs last week, the last thing we need, given

the challenges in the region, is for a disproportionate response by security forces to result in the growing radicalization and hardening of separatist groups.

In the presidential statement that we adopted in August (S/PRST/2018/17) the Security Council called for a strategic review of UNOCA's mandate by 1 August 2019. We look forward to further discussions in the coming months to make sure that UNOCA's mandate is appropriately focused on the most pressing political challenges in the Central African region and that they are well-coordinated with the four United Nations missions operating in the same geographic area, so as to ensure that our efforts have maximum impact and maximum efficiency.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): First, allow me to thank Special Representative Fall and Ms. Ghelani of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their very clear briefings today. Let me also thank their teams for the very important work that they are doing.

I will focus on three issues today: first, the situation in Cameroon; secondly, the need to have comprehensive risk assessments for the root causes of conflict; and, thirdly, the importance of coordination among the different United Nations offices in the region.

Teachers and lawyers in the Anglophone region of Cameroon asked for their minority rights to be protected in a peaceful protest two years ago. Today the health and education sectors are shut down. Indiscriminate violence has led to civilian deaths, reportedly by the Cameroon army and the armed groups. There are over 437,000 people displaced, and there is a clear risk of spillover to the wider region. The escalation of violence shows that conflict prevention requires more than just words; it must be followed up with action.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the territorial integrity of Cameroon. We call on the Government to start a meaningful and inclusive dialogue with all relevant parties, including with women representatives. We fully support the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and call on the Government of Cameroon to implement confidence-building measures, including the release of political prisoners. We thank the Special Representative for his recent visit to the country and for giving this crisis the attention it deserves.

Human rights violations by all parties need to be investigated and the perpetrators should be held to account. We call on the Government of Cameroon and armed groups to grant full access to human rights observers and humanitarian workers to the Anglophone regions. To address the needs of the displaced population, increased funding of the humanitarian relief plan is essential.

With regard to my second point, on the need to strengthen joint and comprehensive risk assessments for all root causes of conflict, the situation in the Lake Chad basin continues to be a matter of concern. As highlighted in the two briefings today, the situation provides a breeding ground for organizations like Boko Haram and causes instability and displacement.

During our presidency of the Council in March, the Kingdom of the Netherlands organized an open briefing on the root causes of conflict in the Lake Chad basin (see S/PV.8212). Briefers, Council members and affected countries confirmed the urgent need to address the root causes of conflict, including climate change and water stress in the Lake Chad basin. Presidential statement S/PRST/2018/17, on UNOCA, which was adopted in August, highlights the needs for risk assessments and long-term strategies to support stabilization and build resilience in the Central African region.

As confirmed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1065) in a section specifically addressing the topic, the adverse effects of climate change continue to be a threat to regional stability. UNOCA has an important role to play in developing sound risk assessments and ensuring conflict- and climate-sensitive programming. We encourage UNOCA to continue to work with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States and other relevant organizations to build on the information in the report of the Secretary-General through further joint risk assessments for climate- and water-related security risks.

That brings me to my third and final point, on cooperation among the United Nations offices in the region. Given the complex situation in Central Africa, it is important that the different United Nations offices in the region maximize their cooperation and complement each other. It is essential that each office focus on its niche role. The Kingdom of the Netherlands sees a clear role for UNOCA to focus on conflict prevention, given

its unique position as a regional office. In that light, we welcome the Special Representative's engagement on the process of peaceful elections in countries that are not served by other United Nations offices, including in Sao Tomé and Principe and Gabon, as well as on cross-border issues, including transhumance and farmer-herder conflicts. It is important that the Special Representative be allowed to use his good offices in the best possible way in the countries he focuses on. We encourage all United Nations offices in the region to consider how to further increase cooperation and efficiency in the future.

In conclusion, the important work of UNOCA and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall show us that there are situations in Central Africa that are at risk of becoming a threat to international peace and security. We hope that, the next time the Council meets on this item, we can see that joint efforts by the United Nations and Governments in the region will have led to tangible results.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We grateful for the convening of this briefing and the briefings provided by Mr. François Louncény Fall and Ms. Reena Ghelani.

At the outset, we want to acknowledge and support the important work being carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in harmonizing efforts and forging strategic partnerships to tackle cross-border threats and the root causes of conflicts affecting the Central African subregion, which, in many cases, is carried out under difficult political and security conditions. We underscore the consistent and systematic deployment of good offices and the work of the Office to bring together and arrive at agreement among various stakeholders to support various peace processes. We also commend the support UNOCA has provided in the holding of elections in four countries of the subregion and its promotion of greater participation by women in politics.

We would also like to highlight the political dialogue and confidence-building measures that UNOCA has been fostering among political and civil society actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in view of the upcoming elections to be held in December and in line with the political agreement of 31 December 2016. We also acknowledge and express our gratitude to UNOCA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the work they are undertaking in Cameroon and the important role that they are both called upon to play in order to prevent a further deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the North-Western and South-Western regions of the country and to promote better respect for human rights.

We note with sorrow and concern the repeated escalations of violence in that country and in much of the subregion, which continues to claim lives. We condemn the terrorism of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region and of the so-called Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Political instability, institutional fragility, extreme poverty and environmental degradation, which have been exacerbated by climate change, continue to produce forced displacement, humanitarian crises, violent extremism and massive human rights violations, including gender-based violence. In that connection, we welcome UNOCA's participation in and support to various conferences and workshops designed to strengthen local capacities to address those challenges and protect the most vulnerable groups through holistic and consistent strategies that are in line with the objective of building sustainable peace.

We emphasize the relevance of initiatives aimed at investigating and dismantling the links between terrorist groups and criminal organizations involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources and poaching. We welcome the European Union's support for those efforts, which are equally important in protecting the environment.

We also stress the importance of promoting greater participation by young people in the political and economic life of their respective countries, in accordance with the study carried out by UNOCA, the Economic Community of Central African States and UNESCO. We would like to recognize UNOCA's efforts to foster adequate coordination with regional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States. Cooperation among those organizations should foster synergies to achieve more effective execution of their respective mandates, under the overarching objective of building sustainable peace.

I conclude by stressing that the international community must increase its support to those most in need in the Central African subregion and to efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and

humanitarian crises and guarantee free and safe access for humanitarian and human rights agencies.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, allow me to thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and his team for the comprehensive and enlightening briefing on the activities of UNOCA in Central Africa.

In the light of the important work being undertaken by UNOCA in the subregion, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to support the extension of UNOCA's mandate to 31 August 2021 so that it can continue to fulfil its mandate to hone and take a comprehensive and integrated approach to the areas of capacity development for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Central African subregion.

Strengthening the cooperation framework signed in June 2016 between UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) secretariat and closely monitoring the tripartite agreement signed on 23 May 2011 in Khartoum by the participating parties are essential to ensuring security along their shared borders, given the porous nature of those borders, which is a source of tension. That tension poses major challenges, which are linked in particular to arms trafficking, piracy, transnational organized crime, the proliferation of armed groups, mercenary activity and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

We urge UNOCA to continue to work hard to create synergies to promote bilateral cooperation among neighbouring countries to strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations — in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Gulf of Guinea Commission — on matters of peace, security, and conflict prevention. In that context, we thank the Government of the Republic of Chad for hosting the forty-seventh ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), which took place from 3 to 7 December in N'Djamena. I would like to point out that some of the issues addressed at that meeting concern the mercenary activity in the Central African subregion. That phenomenon is currently of great concern to the region, given the exponential increases in the uncontrolled circulation of weapons and the conflicts taking place in the region, which pose a serious threat to the peace and security of the States of the subregion. It should be noted that the mercenary activity that we have witnessed in the past years is being perpetrated by adventurers and illegal uncontrolled entities whose objective is always to destabilize Governments and sow desolation in the countries they seek to invade.

I would like to recall the statement made by the President of the Security Council dated 10 August 2018 (S/PRST/2018/17), in which the Council recalls the important work carried out by the Special Representative and Head of UNOCA over the past three years as set out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/521). It acknowledges, inter alia, that UNOCA plays an important role in facilitating inclusive dialogue in Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad, and in promoting stability in the region and preventing and mitigating electoral and post-electoral crises. I would also like to recall the letter dated 16 July 2015 addressed to the President of the Security Council by the Secretary-General (S/2015/554), which informs him of the extension of UNOCA's mandate to enable the Regional Office to cover the electoral cycle process in the subregion.

As we are a country of the Central African subregion that is integrated into its regional and subregional economic communities, Equatorial Guinea encourages Governments and all political actors implicated in the ongoing politico-military crises of our region to continue on the path of inclusive internal dialogue and close regional and subregional cooperation, bearing in mind that if the subregion in particular and Africa in general succeed in overcoming these challenges, it would facilitate the achievement of the African Union's Agenda 2063. It would be difficult to achieve that without the participation and involvement of political actors and the different strata of society in an inclusive dialogue.

In that perspective, and aware that national cohesion and the peaceful resolution of conflict can be achieved only through inclusive national dialogue, His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, convened on 18 July our sixth national political dialogue round table, in which Mr. Fall and his team participated. That initiative enabled the pardoning of all political prisoners on 2 October in commemoration of Equatorial Guinea's fiftieth anniversary of independence, which

helped bring calm and promote harmony throughout the country.

We countries of the subregion are highly mindful of the efforts of the Government of Cameroon to reach a peaceful and dialogue-based solution to the internal crisis being faced by the Anglophone regions of that brother country. We call on the international community to support the Government's efforts and to provide UNOCA with the means necessary for it to continue to carry out its constructive role. The fact that presidential elections were held in Cameroon a few weeks ago without major incidents is proof that those efforts are being carried out. Let us not limit ourselves to making calls to the Government of Cameroon, let us also provide it with support so that it can carry out those efforts to overcome the crisis.

Let me conclude my statement by congratulating Mr. Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, for the excellent work he is doing in our subregion; for highlighting his ongoing contact with our Governments; for conducting frequent visits and promoting dialogue; and for his presence at all the major political events in each of our countries. All of that gives him an exhaustive knowledge of the day-to-day political events in the subregion, as demonstrated by the briefing he gave us today.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Let me start by expressing our gratitude to Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive and informative briefings.

Central Africa continues to face serious political and security challenges; however, we have noted some positive developments towards the consolidation of democratic governance. As electoral processes dominate the political agenda in the region, we commend the fact that several of them took place without major incidents. Nevertheless, further steps towards consolidating stability are needed. Building trust among all the stakeholders remains an essential precondition for the establishment of a stable and constructive political environment.

We praise the important work carried out by UNOCA in terms of good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as in support of the United Nations and regional initiatives to achieve peace and security in the region. At the same time, we remain concerned about the human rights situation in some countries of the subregion. Poland calls on the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi to take immediate steps to prevent further violations and abuses in that regard and to ensure respect for the fundamental freedoms for all citizens. We also appeal to the authorities of Cameroon to take the necessary mediation efforts aimed at a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the South-West and North-West Anglophone regions.

The security situation in Central Africa remains complex and fragile. Many sources of instability persist, including cross-border threats such as illicit trafficking in wildlife and natural resources, as well as violent conflicts between herders and farmers. Climate change is a root cause of conflicts and a threat multiplier in Central Africa. We must emphasize adaptation to climate change and at the same time work to strengthen countries' resilience to such threats.

Acts of terrorism and violent extremism also continue to hamper socioeconomic development. We are concerned about the fact that Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army continue to pose a serious threat to security across significant parts of the region. Poland condemns all acts of violence by those groups, including attacks on civilians, the recruitment of children and sexual and gender-based violence. In that context, we welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's decision to maintain its regional cooperation initiative for eliminating the Lord's Resistance Army, and hope that it will obtain renewed support from other international partners. It is important that the underlying causes of these problems receive an urgent and consistent response, especially through the promotion of good governance and economic reforms, since the unstable situations in some States of Central Africa are the main cause of the humanitarian crisis that persists throughout the region.

In conclusion, Poland fully supports the actions undertaken by the United Nation and the European Union in Central Africa. At the same time, we recognize the key role of the relevant regional partners and organizations and commend their efforts to address the challenges to peace and security and enhance regional cooperation. I also want to express our full support to Special Representative Fall and the staff of UNOCA.

We are grateful for their continuing efforts to advance peace and security in Central Africa.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Reena Ghelani for their information on the situation in the Central African subregion.

We firmly believe that the approach that is fundamental to effective crisis prevention and conflict resolution in Africa is one that combines a leading role for the African people themselves with support for their efforts on the part of the international community. In that connection, we welcome the efforts by the countries of Central Africa to counter the threats and challenges that they face, including through the joint programmes and initiatives to combat Boko Haram and ensure maritime security. Those efforts unquestionably need additional international support. In that context, we note the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in strengthening peace and security in the region, as well as Special Representative Fall's personal good offices.

It is important to continue to expand our engagement with regional stakeholders, including the Economic Community of Central African States. We concur with the assessment in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1065) that Central Africa is dealing with a huge number of challenges on the security, political and economic fronts. Boko Haram's terrorist activity remains one of the chief threats to regional peace and stability and also brings with it serious humanitarian consequences, particularly in the Lake Chad basin region. In that context, we must not lose sight of the fact that the destabilization in the region assumed catastrophic proportions in the wake of the collapse of statehood in neighbouring Libya. The situation in Libya is still far from normalized and continues to have negative repercussions for the situation in the region in general. We welcome the efforts undertaken by Africans themselves to eradicate the terrorist threat, and we hope that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel can make a meaningful contribution to stabilizing the security situation in the subregion.

The situation in the Central African Republic is very worrying. Armed groups have engaged in brutal clashes over resources and territory. We support President Touadera's efforts to hold an inclusive political dialogue, work quickly to reform the security sector and improve the armed forces' capacity. For our part, we will continue to fully support the country's nascent national reconciliation, acting in coordination with the authorities in Bangui and with the African Union and the leadership of the Sudan, as well as with other stakeholders seeking ways to normalize the situation there.

One of the other factors behind the instability in the Central Africa is piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In the light of the unceasing attacks on vessels along the coast of Somalia, a dangerous trend is emerging. We must not forget the importance of a comprehensive approach to combating piracy. We hope that with the support of the international community the pan-regional efforts will help to solve the problem of piracy in an area as economically important as the Gulf of Guinea.

We note that the destructive capacity of the Lord's Resistance Army has shrunk considerably in the past few years. Its numbers have fallen and its activity is limited to sparsely populated areas in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We believe that it should no longer be seen as a significant threat to peace and security in the region.

Like my colleagues, I would like to briefly touch on Cameroon. We are monitoring developments there closely. The information we have is troubling but so far extremely contradictory and not something that we should base any hasty or far-reaching decisions on. We understand the concerns of our British and American colleagues about the information on violations of the rights of the English-speaking population. I have to say that I can only hope that London and Washington will display an equally principled attitude to the infringements on the rights of the Russian-speaking population that are happening right under our colleagues' noses in the Baltic States and Ukraine. With respect to Cameroon, it is important not to cross the line between prevention and intervention in States' internal affairs. There is every evidence that a number of our colleagues have come very close to that. For the time being we have every reason to believe that Cameroon is capable of dealing with this tricky issue by itself. We are willing to help, but only if our partners in Cameroon deem it necessary. At this stage, we urge all the parties in Cameroon to refrain from violence and focus on substantive national dialogue.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the threats and challenges that the Central African

region is dealing with today are closely entwined and interrelated, while the States themselves are highly dependent on one another. The destabilization of the situation in one country is liable to ignite the entire subregion, shattering the security of its neighbours. It is therefore exceedingly important to keep a finger on the pulse of evolving events, for which the activity of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa is useful.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Mr. François Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for his briefing on the political and security situations in the Central African region, including the Lake Chad basin, and the activities of UNOCA during the last six months. I also want to thank Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for her briefing.

We note that the major political developments in the region during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1065) were related to the holding of elections and preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local elections scheduled to be held on 23 December in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that connection, we want to congratulate Mr. Fall for using his good offices in helping to prevent election-related violence. We would also like to recognize the contributions of the regional actors, international partners, religious organizations and local community leaders who are helping to resolve hostilities, in some cases by facilitating the cessation of military or insurgency operations.

Fights for resources in areas such as illegal mining, the exploitation of wildlife and forest products, cattle rustling and transhumance-related clashes are taking more aggressive forms in some countries in the region. In that connection, we want to encourage UNOCA to continue its critical role, particularly in support of inter-State and intercultural mediation efforts.

We should encourage combined mediation efforts, law enforcement and political dialogue involving local communities in order to reduce long-term socioeconomic tensions. United Nations peacekeeping missions and other agencies must work to help reduce and avoid cross-border conflicts. The implementation of the peace process in the Central African Republic led by the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, particularly efforts aimed at achieving a direct dialogue between the Government and the main armed groups, continues to be a priority. Similarly, the progress made in implementing the 31 December 2016 political agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an important step towards ensuring long-term stability in the region, and UNOCA's support to those efforts is also instrumental.

As we all agree, despite many efforts, the armed violence in the eastern and north-eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Central African Republic, as well as the recent repeated attacks by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin and other intercommunal conflicts there continue to present serious obstacles to peace and stability in the region. The deteriorating humanitarian situations in the Central African Republic and the Lake Chad basin, chiefly owing to land degradation and diminishing resources, are creating chronic food insecurity, malnutrition and loss of livelihoods. Those are hard facts that cannot be ignored, and it is important to ensure that the international community and the Council provide the necessary support. We should also note the displacements that are triggering humanitarian crises, including return movements that are exacerbating the problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's greater Kasai region and Tanganyika province. We agree with the Secretary-General's report that the increased frequency of attacks by armed groups in the Beni area, which continue to hinder the efforts to prevent the Ebola virus disease outbreak in North Kivu province from spreading, has been another challenge for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We believe that the efforts of countries in the Central African region to stabilize their economic and monetary situations, as well as the reform activities of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community aimed at improving real gross domestic product growth, are an encouraging sign of the prospects for development. The support of the international community in that regard will be vital to ensuring success across the entire spectrum of socioeconomic development in the region. Enhancing coordination between the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other international partners will be essential to facilitating coherent and

effective stability, reinforced by the impetus provided by economic development.

We support the recent validation of a stabilization, recovery and resilience strategy for the region by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in the areas affected by activities of Boko Haram, as well as the continued commitment of the troop-contributing countries to the Multinational Joint Task Force in their fight against terrorism and transboundary crimes. We also appreciate the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council concerning the need to maintain the African Union's regional cooperation initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, as the security vacuum in the area is worsening. In Cameroon, we encourage the primacy of internal consultations, inclusive dialogue and silent diplomacy.

In conclusion, we strongly support UNOCA's continued efforts and the personal commitment of Special Representative Fall, who is working with all regional and international actors, particularly with a view to implementing the African Union's vision of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. That unquestionably requires a holistic and coordinated effort.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. I also wish to commend the efforts and activities made by members and staff of the Regional Office in discharging its mandate.

I shall focus on three aspects in my statement.

First, with respect to the security and political situations in the region, the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1065) on the situation in the Central Africa region outlines the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, as well as a detailed explanation of the recent political, economic, social and security developments in the region and their impact on peace and security in Central Africa and the States that are facing various challenges there. On the political level, elections have taken place in a number of Central African States, such as Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon and Cameroon, without significant violent incidents, despite ongoing security instability in Cameroon. We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

The scheduled elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are 10 days away. We hope that they will take place with inclusiveness, transparency and safety. In that regard, we emphasize that the political processes and the elections in any State of Central Africa, if conducted in an inclusive, free and credible manner, represent an important step towards maintaining peace and security and achieving the peaceful transfer of power. That would also have positive effects on stability across the whole region.

We are monitoring the political and security developments in the States cited in the report, and would like to stress the importance of the efforts made by the Regional Office, as well as the regional organizations and United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive dialogue between Governments and all community groups, especially in certain States of the region, and attaining the political transfer of power during the upcoming periods.

We are very concerned by the waves of violence and armed conflict in the region, regrettably claiming innocent and civilian lives. We need to find radical solutions to stop the violence and hold the perpetrators accountable. In that regard, we condemn in the strongest terms the criminal acts, suicide attacks, repeated armed attacks, looting and abductions perpetrated by Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army in the region. Those acts hinder progress made at the political, security and development levels and even at the social and humanitarian levels. It is the responsibility of the United Nations, the Security Council, regional and subregional organizations and all the States of Central Africa to confront those attacks and ensure that sustained and common solutions are found for acts of vandalism.

Secondly, we regret the generally worsening humanitarian situation in the region. The number of those in need of urgent humanitarian assistance is on the rise, as is the number of refugees and forced displaced persons. The reason is violence and the outbreak of cholera, Ebola and other diseases.

Regional organizations have cooperated with the States of the region, and we commend the adoption by the Economic Community of Central African States

(ECCAS) of a strategy to prevent and combat terrorism in Central Africa. We also commend the decision to carry out a comprehensive reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). We pay tribute to the fruitful cooperation between ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States, as embodied in the summit convened in Lomé in July. The summit exemplified the genuine commitment of both communities to working together to address the various challenges faced by the States of the region. We look forward to the continued cooperation between the two communities and other international partners interested in achieving the desired peace and stability in the region.

Thirdly and lastly, cooperation between the Regional Office and other regional and international organizations. The many challenges faced by Central Africa, such as the increasing number of conflicts linked to transhumance, climate change, armed conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, along with other economic challenges and social problems, require serious cooperation among the Governments of the region, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the African Union and all regional and subregional organizations. Such cooperation is necessary if the aspirations of the people of the region to stability, security and decent living conditions are to be fulfilled. This is all the more crucial, given that the region has a vast wealth of natural resources, which, if properly tapped, would help it to achieve those aspirations.

I would like to conclude by thanking once again Mr. Fall and the staff of the Regional Office for their tireless efforts.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Louncény Fall and Ms. Ghelani for their informative briefings.

We commend the calm with which the majority of the electoral processes in Central African countries took place and encourage all countries in the subregion to work towards consensus in all areas in order to build peace and stability. Similarly, we invite them to develop measures to build trust in those processes and encourage the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to continue to support the holding of inclusive, credible and peaceful elections. In that regard, we acknowledge the work that UNOCA conducts in those areas, including mediation, preventive diplomacy, and the support it provides to regional and subregional organizations in order to contribute to the reduction of tensions in the region.

With that in mind, we welcome the Joint Summit held on 30 July between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Similarly, we commend the work of the UNOCA secretariat at the forty-sixth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and look forward to the speedy adoption of a declaration on confidence-building measures. We commend the endorsement of the regional action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. We believe that greater women's participation in the area of decision-making will enable progress to be made in building peace in the region. We encourage UNOCA to continue its efforts in that regard and to continue promoting the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We also appreciate the study conducted by UNESCO and ECCAS on the status of youth organizations in seven Central African States in order to combat violent extremism.

We also welcome the various workshops and technical meetings that were held in partnership with subregional organizations. The assistance provided by cooperating with such organizations should not be overlooked, but rather, further deepened, under the principle of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each of the States in which UNOCA implements its mandate. Current and emerging threats should be addressed by working with those organizations in order to diminish the impact they could have on stability in the subregion.

In the same vein, we welcome the regional seminar held in Libreville on the regional integration strategy paper for Central Africa for 2018–2025, developed by the African Development Bank, which recommended accelerating the process of regional integration in Central Africa and finalizing the strategy document on regional integration. Similarly, we praise the endorsement of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region.

In line with the points I have just mentioned, we reiterate that consideration should be given to

replicating the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel in Central Africa, in order to address security and counter-terrorism challenges, within an institutional framework of regional cooperation and coordination. In that regard, we highlight the progress made by the Multinational Joint Task Force and regional and international partners in their fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin, as well as the efforts of the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in line with resolution 2349 (2017). We believe that, to address those challenges, both the countries of the region and the international community, as a whole, must delve into their root causes. One such cause is the lack of control over the exploitation of natural resources which, in turn, are used to supply and finance the illegal activities of armed groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army — a group that continues to pose a threat to the security of civilians in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also urge the international community to take into account the humanitarian situation in the subregion. In the Central African Republic, as of 1 October, the number of refugees has increased to more than 572,000, while approximately 616,000 are internally displaced persons. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, approximately 13 million people are in need of protection and humanitarian assistance, 8 million are facing food insecurity and 4.5 million are internally displaced. In addition, they all face the threat of diseases, such as Ebola, and lack basic services.

With respect to Cameroon, we echo the sentiments expressed by the delegation of Ethiopia, with regard to the Government's primary responsibility of addressing the challenges faced within the framework of political dialogue. It is imperative to continue working and redoubling efforts to mobilize political, technical and financial support in order to achieve peace, stability and development in Central Africa. With that in mind, ongoing support should also be given to the work of UNOCA which, together with the Multinational Joint Task Force, the various entities of the United Nations system, regional offices and country teams, among others, devote their efforts and commitment to achieving peace and stability in the subregion.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Louncény Fall, for his briefing and, in particular, for his efforts at the helm of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). France shares his overall analysis of the situation in Central Africa and assures him of its full support. Not only are the efforts of Mr. Fall very relevant and reflect the value-added of a regional approach to understanding the situations and the dynamics of conflicts, which are often interlinked; they also allow for a preventive approach. That is why France welcomes the three-year extension of the UNOCA mandate, which will enable the Regional Office to conduct its mission of good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as its support for regional initiatives towards peace and security in Central Africa, in particular, strengthening its partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States.

In addition to the fight against Boko Haram, which, regrettably, remains on the agenda, four situations deserve special mention today. First, let us consider the Central African Republic. We are concerned about the security situation, which remains volatile, as seen by the outbreak of violence in Alindao in mid-November. That new wave of violence is a reminder that disarming armed groups, restoring State authority throughout the country and protecting civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, remain priority issues in the Central African Republic. It is imperative that the armed groups commit immediately without preconditions to the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We also reiterate our full support for President Touadera and recall our commitment to assisting the authorities of the Central African Republic in finding a solution to the crisis. To that end, it is necessary to continue to promote the rapid and ambitious implementation of the African Union (AU) road map.

The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only platform for holding discussions with the armed groups that includes the participation of neighbouring States from which a comprehensive political agreement could result. It therefore appears necessary that direct dialogue between the Government of the Central African Republic and the armed groups take place as soon as possible. It will be incumbent on the African Union and the future United Nations-AU Joint Special Envoy to identify the modalities of the meeting that must take place between the Government and the armed groups.

We would encourage the authorities of the Central African Republic to take the necessary steps to achieve a national consensus on the implementation of African

Initiative. The people of the Central African Republic voiced their views on many issues during the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation. The fight against impunity is a key component to the reconciliation process. As Ms. Reena Ghelani just reminded us, the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic must continue to galvanize us, as more than half of the population is suffering from extreme poverty and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Lastly, we are counting on the support of all Security Council members for the renewal of the mandate of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic this afternoon.

The second situation involves Cameroon. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his commitment to confronting the crisis in the English-speaking areas and for the approach he has taken vis-à-vis the Cameroonian authorities. France is concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. The toll in human lives is becoming increasingly high, and the humanitarian situation is increasingly difficult with — I believe — nearly 30,000 refugees in Nigeria and more than 400,000 internally displaced persons. In this regard, we are pursuing our own efforts aimed at encouraging the Cameroonian Government to take ambitious steps to achieve a lasting settlement to the crisis through inclusive political dialogue, de-escalation measures and broader decentralization measures with respect for the unity and integrity of the country. It is necessary that access to humanitarian assistance to those in need be facilitated and that the perpetrators of human rights violations be prosecuted.

The third situation involves the Democratic Republic of the Congo. France is concerned about the events that have punctuated the elections campaign over the past several days. In particular, France is dismayed by reports according to which live ammunition was allegedly fired to disperse protesters, and calls on the Congolese authorities to shed full light on these incidents.

The general elections, scheduled to be held 23 December, represent a historic opportunity as the first-ever democratic and peaceful transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. France calls on the Congolese authorities to create the necessary conditions for the holding of credible elections in a peaceful environment. We must stand ready to support the electoral process in close cooperation with all African partners in the event that the Congolese authorities request us to do so.

Finally, turning to Burundi, we are concerned about the recent developments in that country. In particular, I note the temporary suspension of the activities of foreign non-governmental organizations, the absence of the Government at the fifth and last session of the inter-Burundian dialogue in Arusha, and last week's closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In this regard, we reiterate our support for the mediation led by the East African Community. We hope that the forthcoming summit of this organization, to be held on 27 December, will lead to tangible solutions to facilitate the holding of free, transparent and peaceful elections in 2020.

Preventing conflicts, avoiding the escalation of existing crises and smoothing the way for a return to lasting peace demand a cross-cutting and holistic approach that considers all the dimensions and factors of conflicts as well as their root causes, whether they be inequality, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, or climate and environmental conditions. They also demand responses and commitments at the regional level. In this regard, United Nations regional offices, such as the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, are a critical tool for strengthening the capacity of the Organization to act in a more effective manner. France will continue to support this constructive and necessary evolution in the work of the Organization in the service of international peace and security in a spirit of coherence and greater partnership with African stakeholders.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General François Louncény Fall and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their respective briefings.

Recently, progress has been made in the political processes in the countries of the Central African region. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held a joint summit of their Heads of State and Government and adopted the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism

to strengthen subregional cooperation in the fields of peace and security. China commends and welcomes those developments.

On the other hand, the Lord's Resistance Army, Boko Haram and other armed groups and terrorist organizations continue to pose serious threats to the countries of Central Africa. The international community should pay greater attention to this and support countries of the region in their efforts to respond. The settlement of regional issues requires the cooperation of all parties. To achieve collective security and common development in Central Africa the joint effort of all countries is needed. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) can play an active role in this regard. China would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, respect for the leadership of Africa is a precondition for resolving regional issues. In recent years, the African Union (AU), the ECCAS and other regional and subregional organizations have committed to finding strength in unity and solving African issues in an African way. Many efforts have been made to promote regional peace and development. When assisting Central Africa in solving its issues, the international community should fully heed and respect the views of the countries concerned and maintain close communication with regional and subregional organizations, such as the AU, help them strengthen capacity-building and enhance their capacity to solve their problems independently.

Secondly, achieving security and stability is the foundation for the region's long-term development. China appreciates and supports UNOCA in exercising its good offices and its role in mediation and preventive diplomacy, while continuing to promote political dialogue in the Central African Republic and other countries of the region. The international community should provide further support to such cooperation efforts among countries in Central Africa, for example, in combating cross-border arms smuggling, drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime with the aim of achieving regional peace and stability as soon as possible.

Thirdly, promoting economic development is a guarantee for the long-term stability and security of the region. ECCAS, ECOWAS, and other subregional organizations play an important role in promoting regional integration and development in Central Africa. The international community should support UNOCA and Special Representative Fall to strengthen coordination with the relevant regional and subregional organizations, promote cooperation in the economic and social fields and help countries in Central Africa achieve development and eliminate the root causes of conflicts. China stands ready to continue working to strengthen cooperation with Central African countries and to support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNOCA so as to play a constructive role in helping the countries in Central Africa maintain security and stability, cope with economic difficulties and improve the humanitarian situation.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General François Louncény Fall and Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their informative briefings that have contributed to our meaningful discussion today. We also underscore the President's excellent stewardship of the Security Council this month.

Kazakhstan recognizes the importance of the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as the support it provides to regional and subregional organizations to achieve lasting peace and stability.

We express our deep concern at the violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. We also strongly condemn the increasing incitement of ethnic and religious hatred and violence. We note the important role of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in promoting peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We fully support the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which is an essential tool in stabilizing the country. We highlight the regional dimension of the conflict in the Central African Republic and therefore believe that the further strengthening of political and financial obligations on the part of regional guarantors and international partners will increase the effectiveness of this mechanism. Providing coordinated support to the Central African Republic authorities and its political process is important for any future resolution of tensions.

The unrelenting atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army in the subregion and their subsequent negative impact on the civilian population, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, remain the biggest threat to the peace and security of the entire region. We stress the importance of regional and international support for the African Union Regional Task Force, especially in the context of the security vacuum, which has been exploited by the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups in order to intensify their criminal activities. We commend the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to maintain the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, and we also call on the African Union and international partners to provide renewed support for this mechanism.

The security and humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin deserves urgent attention. The terrorist attacks and destabilizing activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have caused large-scale loss of life and the displacement of civilians, with a devastating humanitarian impact. In this regard, we welcome the recent validation of the regional strategy of the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the areas of the Lake Chad basin that have been affected by the actions of Boko Haram. In view of the urgency of the situation, we encourage international partners to speedily disburse their pledges.

The States of the region have encountered unprecedented challenges in combating terrorism. We must therefore support UNOCA's outreach to coordinate the activities of regional organizations in the fight against terrorism. The challenges posed by widespread violent extremism and the continuing threats to cross-border security and crime are exacerbated by the illicit influx of small arms and light weapons throughout the region. We welcome the outcomes of the first Conference of the State Parties to the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, including its decision to establish a secretariat with a trust fund. This Convention contributes to Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative and creates a framework for Africa to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. It is important for countries that have yet to ratify the Convention to do so at the earliest opportunity in order to boost its implementation and facilitate resource mobilization.

Despite the existing problems in the region, we note the commitment of countries and efforts aimed at increasing subregional integration and ongoing reforms to strengthen democratic governance by facilitating the electoral process, in order to ensure peaceful, free, fair and credible elections. Still, much work remains to be done to implement confidence-building measures, consolidate the gains achieved and make progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's strategies and programmes, in particular Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns by 2020, which should be carried out with the support of the international community.

UNOCA is therefore playing a coordinating role as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, thereby making an invaluable contribution. It is important that the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations continue to work towards formulating and implementing a well-coordinated regional strategy and finding the root causes of the crisis, which are transnational and transboundary. At the same time, to be effective and streamlined, the United Nations must deliver as one, with a strengthened security and development nexus for more enduring political and socioeconomic stability, together with a robust approach involving regional collaboration and the engagement of influential countries and leaders in the region.

Upon the completion of its term as an elected member of the Security Council for 2017-2018, Kazakhstan is stepping down at the end of this month. We were deeply committed to Africa, as we see its great potential as a rising leader in the world's economy in this century. We see its great promise, as well as its problems. Even though this is the last meeting on UNOCA and the Lake Chad basin during my delegation's term in the Council, we will continue to address and support Africa in overcoming the threats that it faces. We offer our solidarity to help the region achieve the great objectives it has set for itself. Kazakhstan will continue to work through the General Assembly and other forums to accomplish the vision of the African continent and its people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

My delegation is grateful to Mr. François Louncény Fall for his briefing on the biannual report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1065) on the sociopolitical and security situation in Central Africa and the Lake Chad basin and on the activities carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), within the framework of his mandate.

I would like to inform Special Representative Fall that in Côte d'Ivoire, as in his country, the outstanding efforts he is undertaking in a subregion that is close to the hearts of all Africans, but which unfortunately finds itself today confronting tremendous problems stemming from human inconsistency but also because of the unpleasant surprises that nature sometimes keeps in reserve for human existence, are greatly appreciated. I am thinking in particular of the rapid drying up of Lake Chad, which was once a source of life and which is now becoming a source of problems that, in turn, has brought about vast humanitarian needs. That is why I would like to welcome the presence among us this morning of Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director for Operations and Advocacy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and express my gratitude for her comprehensive briefing and for all that she has done to draw our careful attention to the humanitarian issues in the subregion.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the recent progress made in a number of Central African countries, including the holding of elections under more or less peaceful conditions. However, my delegation remains concerned at the persistence of such multifaceted political and security challenges as armed conflict, terrorism, trafficking in natural resources, poaching, transnational organized crime and maritime piracy, all of which have disastrous humanitarian consequences, as I mentioned before.

In the Central African Republic, the absence of State authority across significant parts of its national territory, the contradictory attitudes of leaders of armed groups vis-à-vis their commitment to a comprehensive peace agreement in the Central African Republic, the resurgence of ethnic and religious violence, such as the deadly events of 15 November in Alindao, in the north-east of the country, as well as the repeated attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, all remain sources of concern. Given that situation, Côte d'Ivoire commends and further encourages the efforts of the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, and his Government in giving priority to constructive dialogue and consultation with all national and regional actors, including armed groups and civil society, with a view to achieving inclusive and indispensable national reconciliation towards realizing a lasting peace.

In that regard, the implementation of the road map of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, to which my country extends its full support, could be the key to a peaceful and lasting end to the crisis in the Central African Republic. In this context, the decision of the United Nations and the African Union to jointly appoint a Special Envoy to generate fresh momentum in the implementation of this initiative is of paramount importance. Moreover, the commitment of countries of the region — and neighbouring States in particular — including through joint commissions, remains fully relevant to the efficient management of this crisis, especially in light of the challenge of transnational crime.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, progress made in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, known as the New Year's Eve agreement, and the smooth conduct of preparations for the general elections on 23 December 2018 — which are so important for the stability of the country and the subregion — are welcome developments. In order to maintain this positive momentum, my delegation calls on all Congolese political actors to work to create an environment conducive to the conduct of free, transparent, credible and peaceful elections. Furthermore, the vast challenges posed to security, humanitarian and health — particularly in the eastern part of the country, which is marked by the persistence of the Ebola virus — require the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the international community to intensify and better coordinate efforts in order to cope with this epidemic.

In this regard, resolution 2439 (2018), adopted by the Council on 30 October, which concerns Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the action of all relevant stakeholders — including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and bilateral and multilateral partners — is necessary in the fight

against the epidemic in order to create an environment conducive to the return of lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Turning to the situation in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire commends the efforts of the East African Community facilitator and the mediator of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue with a view to ensuring its inclusiveness while addressing the crisis plaguing this country. However, we fear that the absence of the Government of Burundi and certain political actors at the fifth session of the inter-Burundian talks, held from 24 to 29 October in Arusha, will contribute to relaunching the stalemate in the political process. Therefore, my delegation encourages the international community, the African Union and the Community of East African States to continue in their efforts for peace and stability in Burundi towards the holding of peaceful elections in 2020.

The security situation in the Lake Chad basin is also a source of concern to my delegation in view of the continuing threat posed by Boko Haram, whose criminal and terrorist activities have disastrous consequences for civilian populations, particularly children, women and girls in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. In the fight against this scourge, we welcome the implementation of a regional strategy, endorsed by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission on 30 August, for stabilization, recovery and resilience in the areas of the Lake Chad basin affected by Boko Haram's activities. We call on international partners to honour their pledges of assistance, as announced on 3 and 4 September in Berlin at a high-level conference on the Lake Chad region.

Furthermore, the actions of the Lord's Resistance Army — despite its waning operational capacities — continue to threaten the safety of civilians, particularly in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to maintain the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, pending the development of a strategy for the gradual withdrawal of the Initiative, would keep that armed group under pressure and weaken it considerably further.

The difficulties identified demonstrate the need for a participatory and inclusive regional cooperation strategy for all components of the populations concerned in order to provide an appropriate response to the challenges facing the region. In this regard, my country supports the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for the advancement of peace and security, and welcomes the approval of a regional action plan to promote the participation of women in human rights and crisis resolution activities in the region, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000) and in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

The partnership among regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations, in the framework of shared experiences and mutual support to address the challenges to the fight against instability, is proving to be of immense importance. The ECCAS-Economic Community of West African States joint summit on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, held on 30 July, exemplifies such cooperation. We call on the international community to support the implementation of this summit's conclusions.

We stress the importance of collaboration between ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community in the context of integration and regional cooperation, particularly on issues pertaining to peace and security, as well as the good cooperation between UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, aimed at harmonizing the United Nations approach to peace and security in Africa in their respective subregions.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1065) provides useful information on the good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation activities of UNOCA, which has made progress in recent months in the area of peace, security and stability in Central Africa. They placed a particular focus on the prevention and mitigation of crises, support for the implementation of inclusive political reforms and the promotion of dialogue, thereby contributing to the peaceful outcome of elections, particularly in Sao Tome and Principe.

Likewise, the coordinating role played by UNOCA among the various United Nations agencies in the region is a key component of the synergy of United Nations actions in Central Africa. This is attested to by the first workshop attended by representatives of United Nations political components in the region, held on 5 and 6 November in Libreville under the auspices

of the Regional Office, in response to presidential statement S/PRST/2018/17, of 10 August.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its support for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose mission of good offices and preventive diplomacy remains of utmost importance in the quest for peace, stability and socioeconomic development in the States of Central African. Côte d'Ivoire therefore extends its full support to the renewal of the UNOCA mandate until 31 August 2021.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.